

8_19_26 Talk*

*This is an automatically generated transcript, so there are errors.

Rick Hanson: [00:00:00] We have a guest teacher tonight, the Honorable Melvin McLeod. Melvin is a very distinguished authority in Buddhism, long-time practitioner in Tibetan Buddhism, editor-in-chief of Lions Roar, and a related collection of communications, really at the center of the movement of Buddhism into the West in the last generation, and someone who has published a recent book about the complete path of mindfulness, of taking the insight.... Trainings and other trainings from Buddhism, and grounding them in an entirely secular modern framework as a complete path toward liberation and a society that lives in peace and justice and sustainable prosperity for the many, not just the few. It's really quite an ambitious swing, an ambitious undertaking. So I thought that Melvin could be our guest teacher tonight. I wanted to stick around, so Melvin will hold forth. I might ask him some questions. So Melvin, over to you. Do you want to set the table, give us some teachings?

Melvin McLeod [00:01:04] Well I don't want teaching but I can lay out the thesis of my book. But first of all I believe that the so-called mainstream or secular mindfulness movement is of historic importance. I think it is the birth of a genuine new contemplative tradition for the modern world that is brilliantly designed for modern people who continue to long for deep methods of personal and societal transformation. But are not especially interested in following the religious path. And it is an extraordinary accomplishment, which in my book, I trace back to two primary founders, the Zen teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, and of course, Jon Kabat-Zinn, that millions of people around the world are now doing the basic practice of mindfulness. That is an extraordinarily accomplishment. And now, I would argue, it is time for that mainstream mindfulness movement to take the second step in its historic development. And that is to shift how mindfulness is understood, from being a very beneficial meditation technique to being a complete path of life that can help us transform both our own lives and our society.

[00:02:27] And I believe that... When we look at mindfulness as a complete path, that it is reaching its fruition of offering to the world the kinds of deep and powerful techniques for personal and societal transformation that were traditionally only offered through religion in a common-sense, evidence-based format. For modern people who are not especially interested for all kinds of good reasons that we know in following a capital R religious path. So I believe that when we define mindfulness as a complete path of life, we are offering the world a new way to access the kind of deep, effective methods of personal transformation that again, were traditionally only associated with religion. So What I'm proposing is one particular framework for looking at mindfulness as a complete path. And that consists of five elements or keys to mindfulness, which are mindfulness meditation, which is what people currently associate with mindfulness, the practice of calming and focusing the mind, through following the breath, or other objects, to... And this is the key element... The development of insight.

[00:03:59] And in fact, that is one practice, although they have been divided in two, and I have Maintain that division for the purposes of this book. In fact, mindfulness has always been and always will be the two practices put together, the two parts put together. We cultivate a focused and stable mind and then, and this is where the real fruition, the real transformation takes place, we take that focused mind which is capable of resting long enough in reality to truly understand and develop insight into our own true nature, the true nature in this world, the true natures of society, and what truly brings happiness and what

doesn't. With that then as the great tool, we then can turn to our hearts and develop love and compassion. From that, the combination of love and passion plus insight allows us to develop an effective and skillful ethical framework by which we can skillfully help people to have more happiness and to have less suffering. And finally, the fifth of these keys... Is the community in the broad sense, the transformative power of connection to other humans, to other beings, ultimately to the whole universe. So I propose that a complete path of mindfulness consists of those five elements. Mindfulness, meditation, insight, love and compassion, ethics and community. However, it is also true that lots of other people could have another framework. They could add in things like the arts. Or relationships, or the body more, or energy work, whatever. I think the key element is, however we choose to define mindfulness as a complete path, that we do so and expand and deepen the benefits of mindfulness from being a simple, albeit very beneficial meditation technique, to understand and teach and practice mindfulness as the path of life.

Rick Hanson: [00:06:17] Could I ask you a question about that, Melvin? Of course. Okay, so first off, I just want to acknowledge the structure of those five major streams that intertwine. And again, to appreciate how you locate insight as not so much the most important of the five, but certainly crucially important and very important to pay attention to and often left out, in part because the insight you speak of is emotional and somatic and motivational, in addition to having a conceptual gloss. But the real import, the weight of it, is the felt knowing of what is actually true. The good news that it's actually true, okay? So... A little bit of a devil's advocate question so we can name it and then move on. You're drawing this approach certainly from a specific world tradition. You could imagine someone who is very informed about, let's say, the teachings of Jesus, or Muhammad, or Moses and Abraham in Judaism, and who would then extract from them a particular structure, a particular offering, quite sincerely, that was decoupled, separated from... The realization of the root teacher, his lived example, in our case, the Buddha, 2,500 years, certainly from the beginning of a monastic tradition that's been carrying the torch, you know, expanded further in the Mahayana as it moved into Tibet and then onward through China and then Japan, et cetera, et cetera. Is there something wrong about that? Is it a betrayal? Does it falsify our roots?

Melvin McLeod [00:07:57] Absolutely not. I mean, I remain as hardcore a Buddhist as one could imagine. However, the fundamental truths taught by the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths, the Three Marks of Existence, the Eightfold Path, these are not somehow unique revelations. They are, to my mind, universal truths based on universal human aspirations, and universal human capabilities. Buddhism, in many cases, many of the things we're presenting in this format, is perhaps the best exponent of these particular paths. But people who are training their minds to pay attention know that paying attention is not inherently a Buddhist thing. It's just a universal human thing. That the... Truth of change, of impermanence, again, albeit that they are central to Buddhism, are not in any way inherently Buddhist, nor ultimately even inherently religious. They're simple truths. So I think what I'm proposing is that, from a Buddhist point of view, we would call dharma, is possible to present in a... Broader more universal format without the alienating qualities or baggage of religion by simply presenting truth as truth and what works as what works. And yes, in Buddhism, in Mahayana Buddhism, in Faustian Buddhism, there are elements that you would define as clearly capital R religious. I myself practice many of them, but those fundamental truths that to talk. They're simply universal truth as far as I'm concerned. We may, and I may have learned about them, have been taught a lot about them by Buddhism, but that does not make them inherently Buddhist. They're simple true.

Rick Hanson: [00:10:07] Thank you. We'll get to questions in the chat. Some have come in already, and I'll just start with this one. So Melvin, as you yourself have explored these five major streams and done a lot of reflecting and thinking about them, Coming into this approach from your own deep-rooted Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana practice, Mahamudra practice, what has actually shifted for you in your personal practice as you've moved into these five major elements of the complete path of mindfulness?

Melvin McLeod [00:10:45] Well, I don't know that anything has. I mean, things like the Four Noble Truths, guess what? Suffering is real. And here are the fundamental causes of suffering. There is the possibility of lessening or ending suffering, and in fact, there is a specific path to do so. In a way, the somewhat fancier, more esoteric practices that I may do may or may not be effective ways to reach those truths, but I think that those are really what counts. And in a way, you know. You could say, oh, he's a Tibetan Buddhist. Oh, he is a Vajrayana Buddhist. Well, actually, he just actually a Buddhist. And even to be a Buddhist actually is simply to practice and recognize some things that are basically true and that basically work. So... I guess nothing has changed in the sense that those things always remain our fundamental practice as Buddhists, or indeed, and this is the important point, as human beings.

Rick Hanson: [00:12:07] I'm struck by a story of someone who did a three-month retreat in a Theravadan early Buddhist framework at Insight Meditation Society, and this is publicly described by Jack Kornfield, and she was quite concerned about going home to her fundamentalist Christian family, whom she loved, in the South, in America. And roughly some time, weeks, maybe a month or two, after the end of the retreat and she had returned home. People had been invited to send a little note how they were doing. She sent in a letter whose increasingly well-known little section is, my family hates it when I'm Buddhist. They love it when I'm a Buddha. I think you're getting at the heart of the matter here, what it means to be a Buddha, informed, you know, and lived by these five streams of steadiness of mind, insight, loving kindness, ethics, you know, sila, restraint, appropriate behavior, and then opening out into community to serve it and be served by it, beautiful. It's striking that of your five elements, 3 out of 5, 60% are... Intensely interpersonal, even insight fundamentally into our profound inner relatedness with all things that we are passing patterning, you know, in the river of time, right, is itself also very relational. And I wondered if you could maybe speak more to the dimensions of loving-kindness, ethics, and community, because they're really, they form the majority certainly of the complete path of mindfulness as you teach it.

Melvin McLeod [00:13:50] Well they form the whole of our lives ultimately. I mean we only exist in relationship to other people, to the universe, to the sun, to water, to earth. I mean there is no way in which we are isolated or alone in which our realization or our fruition as human beings takes place alone. I don't believe. I may spend decades in a cave are really only preparing. Ultimately to go out and to relate to others. There's only one place in this entire book where I quote the Buddha, and that's in the section on community. And where the Buddha is famously asked is friendship half of the spiritual path? And he answers no, it's the entirety of the spiritual path. And of course we don't know exactly what the Buddha said 2600 years ago, But I would maintain he was talking about friendship in the very, very broadest connection, that our deep connection to other people, that the sense of community, even even we as individuals are communities of billions of cells, that friendship or love or compassion or connection is not even half of the spiritual path, it is the whole of the Spiritual Path. Having said that, I now remember what I wanted to say, so I will step back a sec, because I'm going to reveal... The hidden agenda behind what I am trying to do in this book.

[00:15:29] I have sadly come to the conclusion, and I have pretty good evidence to do this as an observer and participant in the Capital B American Buddhist world, that although Buddhism in this world, this modern world in the United States, is of deep value with many great practitioners and teachers, that the little known Asian religion of Capital B Buddhism is never going to have. Widespread impact or benefit in the society, in American society. And that, in effect, the container of the religion of Capital B Buddhism, in fact, is an impediment to the spreading of the basic truths of the Dharma as widely as possible in order to produce the maximum benefit.

[00:16:21] And in the end, so, I propose that indeed These are basic truths of change, impermanence, joy, the causes of suffering, what brings freedom from suffering. All this can be presented in a way simply that is evidence-based, that is modern, that is accessible without the barriers or hindrance. Not even of a particular age and religion, but of religion altogether. Because are these things religious or are they just inherently human? So I think that we serious Buddhist practitioners, which I have the feeling there are many of listening to this now participating in this event, are going to continue to be able to practice deeply to put down the deep roots of the dharma in the society. But in terms of actually producing the maximum benefit, I think that Buddhism can be the inspiration and teacher for the presentation of small dharma in the broader society. But I personally believe that the greater benefit, the greatest benefit will come from a deeper and more expansive understanding of The teachings and practices as presented in the mainstream mindfulness movement. It's a simple expedient.

Rick Hanson: [00:17:48] You're on a mission. I support your mission. I endorse that mission. I wonder if you could comment on a really deep theme having to do with, let's say, cancer. So just to kind of set this up in a frame that people here might be somewhat familiar with, technically there is the dukkha of the three characteristics. In other words, living inherently involves. Change, interconnectedness, and the fact that sometimes there are unpleasant experiences. And the fact, that even pleasant experiences end and have the nature due to change and interdependence of being cloud-like rather than brick-like so we can't own them or possess them. So no single experience is a permanent source of happiness. That's the dukkha of the three characteristics, there's no escape from it. Then there is the dukkha of the Four Noble Truths, the first of which is the Dukkha of suffering. And a distinction might be made in English between pain in the three characteristics and the suffering that involves our mental reactions. That distinction is also found between the first arrow and the second arrow that were the first dart and the 2nd dart of the dukkha the three characteristic and the dukh of the four Noble Truth. And understanding that distinction is crucially important because life is not suffering. Life includes joy and sorrow. It includes sukha, which is pleasure and happiness and sweetness and contentment, as well as dukkha. Those are inescapable facts.

[00:19:31] So much of our practice is about relieving ourselves from the machinery of tanha, the and noble truth of our drives, our cravings, and our self-enlightenment. And so one may have cancer, cancer's a fact, and with it may come, understandably, the pain, the sorrow, the discomfort that's emotional, the grief, physical pain is very real, all that may be the case, and yet if we do not add craving to it in the Second Noble Truth of Tantra, if we don't add craving and selfing to it, then we do no add suffering to it. In the moment that the second dart arises in our mind, we cannot help it, it's arisen, it is there. But then we don't have to add further second darts to it. That's our great opportunity. So that's a setup for you, Melvin. It's kind of classic Dharma there. How might the five elements of the complete

path of mindfulness help a person throw fewer second arrows, including with a serious health condition like cancer?

Melvin McLeod [00:20:42] Yes, well, I mean... And how to actually deal with that kind of level of pain and suffering is almost beyond my pay grade. But what I can say is this, that through the creation of mindfulness-based stress reduction, John Kabat-Zinn created the mainstream mindfulness movement. And, in fact, it was specifically, it wasn't even stress reduction, it was specifically to help people deal with serious problems of chronic illness. That was at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He created a clinic using techniques of yoga and mindfulness. And right from the very beginning of MBSR, and recognizing that that then led to an understanding of mindfulness as a very, almost mechanical technique to help us deal with specific problems in this life. That actually, right from the very beginning, the techniques that John had those patients do in MBSR were based on insight. Were based on trying to help them to recognize, for instance, that the pain that they were experiencing came and went. It wasn't as permanent or as solid as they thought it was. And that the person who was experiencing it also was not as permanent, or as, solid as, they thought they were. As they thought, as they thought they, were.

[00:22:24] So actually right from the very beginning, insight was actually the key healing element in, even in the very medically oriented, scientifically oriented program of MBSR. So I would say myself that a combination of insight in which we realize hopefully that we were able to find a part of our being that actually is Unhurt or is still intact, in spite of what we may be experiencing on a day-to-day level, the physical or emotional difficulty. And then that, and this is where the third, perhaps ultimately most important key comes in, in the love and compassion part. And as it turns out, the longest single section in my book are teachings, not by me, but by really good, serious teachers like our friends Kristin Neff or Christopher Germer, on self-compassion. So I think some combination of insight and self-compassion, love directed and caring directed towards ourselves really is the best we can do. But you know what? Cancer still sucks. I don't care.

Rick Hanson: [00:23:48] Oh, thank you. Thea, I'm going to take a chance here and hope that you have a question or comment that is concise and of general interest and related to what we've been talking about. So I'm gonna ask you to unmute.

Thea [00:24:04] I got very excited at the beginning, and I can't remember exactly what you were talking about, Melvin and Mick, but it had, we're right on it again, something to do with the... Bad that exists even as much as is being held by the good. You know, what else can we say about it? And I think that I have been working on an autobiography and I worked all weekend to find my friend that I played with when I was 10 years old and I found her. Because we used to discuss, we were friends through Unitarian Church School. So we had a general religion that wasn't too religious, but we believed that it was good to love others always unconditionally. So we believed in loving kindness, even though we didn't call it that. Anyway, so. The question we had is should we, should we love and forgive Hitler? Okay. That's the question. And, and for her family, not her so much, but she's the one that asked the question, it was very real because her family escaped Hitler in Austria.

Rick Hanson: [00:25:25] All right, thank you, Thea. Okay, Melvin, that's an easy one. That's just a mere softball. Want to take a swing at it? Thank you.

Melvin McLeod [00:25:34] I hope you're being ironic. I don't consider that easy. Well, it's the problem of evil in the world. I guess at some ultimate level we can love and forgive. I guess I'm not sure what forgiveness means really, but understand anyway perhaps. But I can't really do that myself at the relative level. I think there is such a thing as evil in this world. I recognize that its roots come from misunderstanding what truly brings happiness. I mean, even a Hitler felt in his evil, evil way that he was bringing happiness to the world. So there was a fundamental misunderstanding. So his idea of happiness was to kill millions of people. Well, obviously, there could be nothing more misunderstood than that. But at heart that way way way deep down there was some sort of universal type human goodness there. I mean I guess my own feeling might be that people under those circumstances at some level are ultimately not responsible because they're the product of causes and conditions but I'd still kill them.

Rick Hanson: [00:26:54] Thank you. You know, as you know from your Tibetan training, there are these five reflections. Is it given to me to escape aging? Is it given to me to escape illness? Is it given to me to escape dying? Is it given to me to escape being separated one way or another, one day or another eventually from everything I love? And is it given to me to escape inheriting the results of my volitional actions? I'm slightly editing those Melvin, but that's the essence. And the emphasis on volitional action, deliberate choice. So Hitler made a lot of volitional choices that he's responsible for and has inherited the results of. So anyway, there's that clear distinction in Buddhist morality between volitional deliberate and just being swept along. You know, you bump into some, if the, I don't know, somebody bumps into you and you accidentally bump into somebody else and they fall off a cliff, well, it's a terrible thing. You feel terrible about it, There's no karma from it. You haven't deliberately pushed them over the cliff, let's say. Anyway, just to move on here. Before we go further, I want to bring in a question that came in through the chat privately. Maybe you could do it kind of briefly, Melvin, so we can keep going. Rumination. Rumination is a big topic. Recently, we've been exploring how to delight in nonproliferation. Nonproliferation is, of course, the opposite of the proliferation of rumination. Briefly. How might one or more of these five elements help to prevent rumination in the first place and also help people get off the rumination express if they find that they've got a first-class seat on it?

Melvin McLeod [00:28:34] Even though I might say, oh, do this and do that, that does not make it easy. I mean, the fact that problems are just in our mind or they are our mind, far from making them easier to solve, make them much more difficult. But, of course, the standard formulaic answer would be, A, the basic practice of mindfulness. Simply try your best to return again and again to a simple, direct experience of reality. Uncomplicated in the body and the breath. Now of course everybody stuck in those things is tries that and your mind still goes on and goes on. So that's very tough. The other thing is then I guess it's also important to feel sorry. I have nothing wrong with saying you can feel sorry for yourself. I mean in a way self-compassion is to say I'm suffering. Feel sorry for myself as I feel sorry for other people who are suffering and that's also good and and of course It's very important that you not blame yourself because that only adds another layer of suffering to it Oh, I got to stop this. What an idiot. I am. It said it's that and so finally I think Perhaps the ultimate answer to the extent that there is one is again We go back to the nature of pure awareness if we start to realize there are these things that are passing through my mind, that are passing through, my awareness, but my awareness itself is always there and is not ultimately affected by them. And if I can then rest in the place that lightens up and it ultimately sees through those thoughts that are plaguing me, then I think that's a help as well.

Rick Hanson: [00:30:22] Beautiful, beautiful. So, Marilyn, I'm going to ask you to unmute. If you're able or willing to turn on your camera, that's great. It's not necessary. There you go.

Marilyn [00:30:31] Yeah, thank you so much, Rick. I just want to very quickly thank you, Melvin, because I think what you're trying to do is what's frustrating me when I get involved in these big meditation groups. Meditation has taken off. People are meditating, but that alone is not the spiritual path. Meditating for relaxation and taking a break from the hassles of the world and letting your body rest. That's all fine and good. But during that meditation, the insight that you talk about is what's really important, I think. And I'm glad to see you trying to promote that to the public, especially to the people, you know, who are already meditators. I joined these big Rick's got a big one, three, four hundred people. But they're not getting it. They're not the notion of awareness and what it is and what role it plays in their lives and how all their suffering is tied to their personal identity. So thank you for writing the book. I think it's a wonderful contribution to society. Thank you, Melvin.

Melvin McLeod [00:31:43] Well, thank you for saying that. I appreciate that. And I do find it interesting that the, I mean, I had an experience when I first presented this material in Lion's Roar magazine and asked a fairly well-known mindfulness teacher who was also a Buddhist to write the piece on insight. And he said, oh, that's interesting. I've never thought of insight in a non-Buddhist context. And that was a real revelation for me, but. It is then interesting that I don't think there is a sufficient emphasis on insight in the mainstream mindfulness world. I'm hoping to correct that. The good news, however, is that even those people who are only in it for perfectly good concrete reasons, there's nothing wrong with relaxing, and there's something wrong with focusing and calming their mind. As it turns out, when you do that, you can't stop insight from arising. Now, admittedly, you could. You can accelerate that process with a concrete conscious recognition of the development of insight and techniques that help do that, but the fact of the matter is that when you slow down your mind, you can't help but see reality more clearly. So the good news is that even those people, in the end, will become more insightful.

Rick Hanson: [00:33:03] And you here might be amused to know the fact that Melvin then turned to me to write that essay in Lion's Roar, which I did and it was published. And it was an honor to be able to write that essay and it amuses me to consider the context.

Melvin McLeod [00:33:18] So anyway, I want to say, Rick, that that is a very, very good essay. It's online as well. I also just put it up on the Facebook post about this event on my Facebook feed. But I think that in a way you've done a really you did a really superb job of presenting those. Fundamental contemplations about the nature of what we're experiencing, both internally and externally, and how to look at them and analyze them. And once again, with no particular need for any capital R religion, it's simply, hey, let's just look accurately at what's happening to us inside and outside. And in fact, the chapter in my book on insight is called, The Healing Power of reality clearly. And your essay did an awful lot, appointed people to some very important ways and very helpful ways to see reality clearly.

Rick Hanson: [00:34:14] That's great, beautiful. Let's see, I see you there, Andy. Before we go forward though, I want to name a question that came to me privately, and it's kind of fundamental. So Melvin, to paraphrase this person, this person is really interested in the transcendental, in God, and that's very meaningful for this person. And there are people like myself for The Ultimate Liberation is founded in... Being in touch with the unconditioned absolute ground of all that the Buddha pointed to, I think, in his own journey

into cessation and nibbana and awakening. Now many people absolutely stop at the water's edge of the Big Bang universe as this deterministic Conditioned clockwork unfolding, okay On the other hand, there are those of us who are interested in and have experiences of and even beliefs in, and unconditioned, timeless, not subject to arising and passing away, uncondition, eternal ground, that may also have qualities of consciousness and lovingness. Okay. So in your... Development of an explicitly secular, you're making a hard right turn away from anything that smells like religion, approach the secular, the complete path of mindfulness. What room might there be in that path, that complete path, of mindfulness for those like this questioner or myself who are deeply interested in the ultimate, transcendental, eternal, timeless, unconditioned, ground of all?

Melvin McLeod [00:35:59] Well, I would say that all of these techniques that we might call mindfulness, loving-kindness, they are completely applicable to anybody of any belief system or none at all. So albeit that presenting it as secular mindfulness does make it accessible to those who are not particularly interested in religion. I mean it's... It's like the Ten Commandments. I mean, maybe a couple of them are specifically religious. I don't even know, to be honest. But a lot of them were simply human ethics and human truths. And so I think that the nice thing about these aspects of secular mindfulness is that they're just as helpful to people who, if they want them, if they find that they find it a good adjunct. To their current belief system, then that's good. I mean, I would say I feel a lot of sympathy for that person, whoever you are out there, because I personally feel, and I'm speaking as a Buddhist, that in our view often of Buddhism as a quote unquote non-theistic religion, that we are really missing something that is present and a reality that's understood by people who believe in God. And God is simply a name, but in a way, by looking at Buddhism as not having a deity or not having an external universal truth, that we miss the kind of living, loving, universal, even omniscient quality that is basically a quality of reality itself. So actually in a way although we could often say, well, Buddhism doesn't have a God, I actually think that a lot of Buddhists, and I certainly can speak for myself here, are really missing something that a lot of people who do believe in God have, that I think we need to add back into our Buddhism. Whether it could be added back into secular mindfulness, I don't know. But at least I know that the techniques of mindfulness, of loving-kindness, of good ethics, all these things. If people find that this particular presentation of them is helpful, they are completely compatible with believing in God.

Rick Hanson: [00:38:24] I really appreciate your inclusion of the three aspects of loving-kindness, ethics, and supporting community. I've known a lot of people. I got into the whole psycho-spiritual game back in 1970, I'd say, with the Human Potential Movement, New Thought, blah, blah blah. And I knew a lot people who had tons of insight. They could talk the talk, you know. And they were offended by the reactions of others. Various ways and yet they themselves were very reactive about the reactions of others. I think that you know there's this proverb that we we need to be careful about knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing sometimes so I just want to kind of appreciate that in your book that emphasis on managing our own responses to the responses of others you know in this life. Now I'm noting that Andy or Andrew has there you are you're back again all right

Andrew [00:39:22] First of all, thank you, Rick, for having Melvin. He's wonderful. He's inspirational. I couldn't do some of the practices very well, particularly the one. But I mean, that's OK. That's just the onset of a learning process as far as I'm concerned. But Rick, I just wanted to thank you for all your recent discussion about proliferation. Because labeling it that way helped me. Understand the mechanism of it to some degree and and how it was operating in my life. You know, I struggled with it for a little while, but you know,

I found a couple of couple of things that really helped me to dismiss it after a while. And one is of just turning my attention back to my body and just feeling how my physical self is doing at that moment. And that shift of focus really, really relieved. The you know the the helplessness of feeling that you can't suppress the proliferation and uh the other thing is a loving kindness it's just like i'm you know my loving kindness is like they're working for me all the time now and so i could sort of turn to that and say well let's just do a little bit of that and you know understand that sometimes proliferation happens but that we can be aware of it but not be overwhelmed by it.

Rick Hanson: [00:40:52] Oh, lovely. I appreciate that. And I have to say, for those of you that are still here, I just feel a lot of gratitude for you all. That you're in the game, you know? And you're real. Just think, 320 people, plus or minus, that you're engaged with this. Like, thank you. Thank you, Melvin, for having the courage to, as someone at the helm of a leading Buddhist magazine, to stick your neck out and make an argument that, you know, mainstream, capital B, Buddhism is not going to have the influence it might otherwise have if it kind of stays behind the doors of its own religiosity on some huge topic. But really, thank you for that. Do you have any last sentences, Melvin?

Melvin McLeod [00:41:46] Then we'll just kind of be together. I just want to repeat what you said. I want to express my gratitude for you, Rick. I feel like we've established a really lovely relationship. And to all of the people who attended this, and I too feel gratified that some hundreds of people have joined us for this, that you are all seriously pondering these life and death issues, really. The life and death question of. Of what brings happiness, what brings awakening, what doesn't, that you're all pondering this and my feeling is just from this one thing is that this one event is that you have a really positive and loving and lovely community. So I really wanna thank you for welcoming me in. I've really enjoyed it. And it's very heartening, heartening in this world with all of its problems to find so many people. Who are trying so hard to do the right thing.

Rick Hanson: [00:42:46] That's great, thank you. Thought we could just take a few breaths and let in. The felt. Comfort. And release in what Melvin has been offering here. So I'll end, as multiple people have asked, with my own version of the traditional classic, Five Remembrances, from Tibetan Buddhism. Any errors in translation or my own. So these are questions to live into. Is it given to me, yourself, to escape aging? Is it give to me to escape illness? Is it giving to me to escape dying? Is it given to me to be separated one way or another, one day or another from everything I love? And is it given to me to escape the results of my deliberate actions?